



## AROUND THE GALLERIES

DAVID PAGEL

### Pop as a vehicle for self-reflection

Pop Art has never been known to have much time for quiet contemplation. Soup cans, cola bottles and comic strips have seemed to be all about quickly delivered pleasures and even speedier messages.

But everything changes. At the Mark Moore Gallery, **Todd Hebert's** new paintings reveal that Pop's snappy graphics are not intrinsically opposed to slowly brewed sentiments that deepen into sustained meditations on big subjects such as mortality and the meaning of it all.

The images in Hebert's easily recognized pictures are as common as the holidays: Fourth of July fireworks, snowmen and strings of twinkling Christmas lights. The techniques he uses — airbrushed acrylic and super-realistic rendering — have adorned hot

rods and surfboards for decades. And influential artists such as Ed Ruscha, Vija Celmins, Peter Alexander and Gerhard Richter have employed similar strategies and media to develop their signature styles or artistic "brands."

Despite the likelihood of all these elements becoming clichés and adding up to tedious mediocrity, Hebert has managed to beat the odds to do something unlike anyone else. His nighttime pictures of soft-focused cityscapes, moonlit hillsides and reconfigured Hollywood signs use the readily accessible language of Pop as a vehicle for deliberate self-reflection. His works are cool and moving — unique, without being self-obsessed; and social, without being stereotypical.

There's romance in Hebert's bittersweet pictures. They balance intimacy and distance in ways that leave plenty of room for melancholy and optimism, realism and mystery.

**Mark Moore Gallery**, 2525 Michigan Ave., Bergamot Station, Santa Monica, (310) 453-3031, through Aug. 15. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.markmooregallery.com](http://www.markmooregallery.com)